

NOAA Employee Forum
Sand Point Auditorium, Seattle Washington
January 13, 2004
10:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

1. NOAA's Future Directions:

John J. Kelly, Jr. Brigadier General, USAF (Ret.)
Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (Follow-up Issues and Questions)

- NOAA staff would like more details on NOAA's Telework policy.
- We (Sand Point employees) participated in the PPBS Goal Teams and it seems to have gone into a black box. What has happened to all the work?
- Difficulty with CAMS.
- Allocations are not getting to Sand Point in a timely manner.
- Sand Point personnel think facilities need improvement but Assistant Administrators and Deputy Assistant Administrators do not raise this as an issue at NEC/NEP meetings.

2. Facilitated Section of Employees meeting

What are the obstacles that you are facing?

1. Need collective management attention to get money out to the field in the right places in a timely manner.
2. Need for national planning for facilities, HR, contracts and acquisitions, and financial systems.
3. Earmarks prevent flexibility to apply resources to priorities.
4. Failure of HQ to give adequate timelines for responding to requests for comments, feedback, and clearances.
5. There is a Culture of Dis-empowerment – nobody feels that an answer is in their hands; the answer to this problem can only come from the highest levels.
6. Lack of flexibility in the PPBS process. There are inconsistencies between 5 year PPBS process and 1 yr Strategic Plan.

7. There is a lack of funding, a lack of local money, to operate while planning for mission critical administrative support, facilities, and safety activities.
8. PPBS is structured to provide input to program areas but there is no way to provide input to facilities and other Goal-wide services. Facility needs do not get addressed in context with programs.
9. Continuing Resolutions are not just an inside the beltway issue. It's here, too. Allocations come late but we can plan ahead to spend and execute when the money does come. But there may be a meltdown when the money is delayed. Problem is we need the money on Oct 1st. We know there will be a Continuing Resolution every year so we must learn to plan for it. There is a huge difference between getting money in February and getting it in July. We can do prudent, decent planning to obligate as much as we can.
10. Soft money may help to handle budget shortfall but legal hurdles seem to be in the way. There are difficulties in getting NOAA to accept money from other agencies.
11. This is not the first time government has had a Continuing Resolution but this is the first agency where we can't hire anyone or get promoted under Continuing Resolution. Where is the motivation to improve, excel? What can management do to help this situation?
12. Is the PPBS system going to be persuasive to Congress? Maybe / Yes, because it ties performance to budget.
13. We've been told that some of the problems of NOAA Administration not having Congressional respect is that our senior NOAA management does not respect the valuable contribution of the NOAA Administration staff. NOAA Leadership is not giving ASCs respect for the work they do and the commitment they have. Mission input is not respected.
14. Challenge is to have a consistent NOAA approach to administrative services. Challenge is how to support and improve administrative services to help us do what we need to and to help us get through difficult times of the year. Would like to hear more from Jack Kelly on how these issues will be addressed.
15. Seattle staff needs more information on how national plans are developed so they can participate more effectively.
16. Hires at ASCs need approval from HQ but that often takes months and does not work!
17. NOAA Administration needs to be considered a Strategic Partner. Need to consider HR, for example, as integral to the accomplishing the NOAA Strategic Plan. Administrative staff is not seen as a partner in the planning or as a strategic thinker.